



Pisco Capel's new moai-shaped bottle.

- Work is nearing completion on the re-roofing of all the school buildings, and a new school director has been selected.

- Sadly, Martín Rapu died recently due to complications from diabetes. Martín was Bill Mulloy's assistant during the excavation at Vinapu in 1955-56, and then accompanied the Norwegian Expedition on its further travels to Pitcairn, Rapa, Tahiti, and Nuku Hiva. In later years, partly due to their association with Bill, Martín and his wife were among the first islanders to enter the tourist business, opening their guest house and importing one of the first tour buses to be seen on Rapa Nui.

- The following "letter to the editor" appeared in *El Mercurio de Valparaiso*, written by Florentina Hey, Director, Association Pae Pae Here Taine, Easter Island. The item was titled "Alcoholic Moai" and was in response to the new pisco bottle formed in greenish-black glass in the shape of a *moai*. The top replicates a *pukao*.

"Sr. Editor: It has caused us great surprise and indignation that an alcoholic beverage has been launched on the market by Pisco Capel, in a bottle shaped as a *moai*. The *moai* is a part of our cultural heritage and for the Easter Islanders it is a sacred symbol and one of much respect for our community. We do not understand how they can make merchandise from a symbol of such importance and pride and of great historical, religious and moral value for us. We ask what would happen if another company used the Christian symbol of a cross with the purpose of promoting a product on the market. What is clear to us is that the use of our image for their own benefit is an exercise in arrogance."  
[Note: There was no response by the Pisco company, to our knowledge. These blackish bottles are already collectors' items and some were raffled off at the Albuquerque meeting, to the delight of those who obtained one.]

#### Another film in the offing

Dr. Markus May, a freelance filmmaker from the Westdeutscher Rundfunk of Cologne, Germany, spent eighteen days filming a new TV documentary. May's program will air on WDR in March.

#### Tapati Rapa Nui

Tapati Rapa Nui 1998 stretched over a two-week period. The stage backdrop (set up outdoors, again) was a large Vai'a Heva, with the platform itself being the open mouth. The festivities included a few interesting new things: dance, body painting, and Rapa Nui language competitions with tourist

participation; a presentation-dramatization of the history of Rapa Nui women's dress or costume; large scale carving competition, not of the typical "moai-ette" as in previous years, but of replicas of Vai'a Heva. Another stone carving competition was of 'Orongo/tangata manu motifs. There were several good music and dance performances. The two queen candidates were Francesca Avaka (Paoa) and Sabrina Tuki Pont. The island weather was unusual for mid-summer; instead of hot and summer-like, it was windy, grey, and even cool, but without rain. It is assumed the fault lies with the El Niño phenomenon.

## Letters to the Editor

*Paul Bahn's review of the South Seas Symposium in the December 1997 issue has brought in various comments, two of which we share with our readers. Complaints and compliments are arriving in equal numbers.*

☺ Dear Editor,

I was glad to read the December issue of *RNJ* and especially to see Paul Bahn's review of the South Seas Symposium; I had some of the same criticisms myself!

*Emily Ross Mulloy, Laramie, Wyoming*

☹ A Response to Paul Bahn's Review of the South Seas Symposium "Talking Turkey in Albuquerque: A Few Observations on the 1997 Conference" (*RNJ* 11(4):163-64):

I have never met this particular talking turkey, but his gobble certainly lays an egg when it comes to attempting to project the image of a profound anthropomorphic owl. Disparaging hoots of sarcasm and beak biting abuse is not consistent with an owl's profoundness. It is silly enough for a turkey to attempt an imitation of an intellectual owl, but it verges on fatuity for a solidly-based anthropological scholar and journalist to seemingly attempt to obfuscate this background. At least this is the conclusion one must draw from his apparent attempt to imitate a professional buffoon. He does so by taking a high ground position over others through his use of sarcasm, disrespect, misinformation (or is it now disinformation?), and plain meanness in writing about those in his chosen field whose ideas, fieldwork and reports, as well as hypotheses, do not correspond with his own.

Unlike mathematics or chemistry, anthropology is one of the soft sciences in which solid proof is hard to come by. Thus the broadest of approaches are often required in order to eventually distill out the more likely answers to some questions, especially those pertaining to the past. Numerous answers can be expected, and their potential validity must be examined, discussed, and yes, argued, but the use of boorish berating has no



Drawing of the real Vai'a Heva, Poike, by Curt Johnson (from Lee 1992). The mouth is large enough to accommodate a large adult and usually is filled with rain water. This impressive face is carved on the side of a cliff and is a Poike landmark.

place in this activity. A true intellectual searcher of the human cultural past must be open to look at and reflect on what he has seen in many directions. A laser-eyed, egocentric sees only what is desired to be seen, and buries all else in the guano of meaningless turkey talk.

Edwin N. Ferdon, Tucson, Arizona

#### Response from Bahn:

If my review of the South Seas Symposium caused any offense, I can only apologize. However, Ferdon's angry ornithological ramblings not only miss the fact that the review was somewhat tongue in cheek, but also that the crucial point is not whether Heyerdahl's hypotheses correspond with those of others—in fact this is quite irrelevant. Instead, it is his treatment—or rather his ignoring—of the opinions of others which is the crux of the matter. I will give two pertinent examples here. With regard to the Laramie congress of 1993, Heyerdahl's view is that (*The Times*, 11 July 1995) "... gradually, most [scholars] have come round to his views. There were more than 100 participants at a recent conference on Easter Island, and none quarreled with Heyerdahl's detective work." And concerning the Albuquerque meeting, here is what he had to say about those who disagree with him, in a recent Dutch TV show, screened on January 4th this year: "I go from one congress to the other now, and the people who say this and that, they are not the people who show up on the congresses. I've been just this year, I've been with the 150 [sic] International Congress on Easter Island in United States in New Mexico, and I was the only one who gave a full evening speech. There was not one who got their finger up to bring up a contrary argument, and my conclusion was direct contact Peru-Polynesia. If they had any argument, why do they always come up to newspapers and things, but never when I'm present, and I go from one congress to the other."

I will leave it to those present at both conferences, as well as to the judgment of RNJ readers, to decide whose version of events is the more accurate!

Paul G. Bahn

Dear Editor:

Professor Fedorova (RNJ 11:4:152) reads *Kohau rongorongo* sign #000 as 'ta (PPN *taa*, PMP *tak* (?) " . . . with possible translation in ancient Rapanui 'to cut' . . ."

PMP (= Proto-Malayo-Polynesian) \**tak* (?) is however already history: cf. Proto-Austronesian \**ke* (t, C) *ats* 'cut something with a knife'—related to Proto-Tai \**tat* 'cut off, sever' and Japanese *tat-i* 'sever, cut off, cut in two' (Paul K. Benedict, *Austro-Tai*, (1990:178-179).

W. Wilfried Schuhmacher, Gadstrup, Denmark

#### Thorophobia: Or, Some comments on a sailor's blast into cyberspace by Grant McCall

This little note is not hagiographic, even ethnographic, but it does contain material that may be offensive to some: the frequent mention of Thor Heyerdahl's name!

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you submitted "Kon-Tiki" to a web search engine?

At the end of January 1998, you get a disappointing,

although numerologically suspicious 777, being a thrice over digit plus on the sign of the "Great Beast"! Now, for those of you who do not know or care what a web or a search engine is, you need read no further, but if you do (and don't mind recurring references to Thor Heyerdahl), then read on!

At the very stimulating Albuquerque conference, so well summarized by Paul Bahn in the last RNJ, Heyerdahl remarked that he had found "Kon-Tiki" associated with all sorts of organizations and businesses. Almost to prove the point, two people sported Reyn (Hawai'i) colorful shirts with Rapanui and raft designs, called "Kon-Tiki". Prominent amongst the 777 in my New Year list is a caravan park at St Tropez (France) and a multiple entry, multi-lingual series of notices for a Diving School in Phuket (Thailand). I did not pursue the rest, for I was looking for the Kon-Tiki Museum (Norway) web site, which I found at <[http://www.media.uio.no/kon-tiki\\_index.html](http://www.media.uio.no/kon-tiki_index.html)>

The site itself is attractive enough with a personal greeting by Thor Heyerdahl in a "Quick Time" movie, references to publications, a shop, expeditions, a CD-ROM and credits for all that design work. Unfortunately, I could get only the welcome movie, publications and credits to work, but you might have better luck.

CD-ROM? I reported in these pages last year a French product centered on Rapanui itself, but this 1995 CD-ROM (how did we miss it?) focuses directly on Thor Heyerdahl himself as the title explains: "Kon-Tiki Interactive. The life and work of explorer Thor Heyerdahl".

As I could not get a preview at the Museum site, I contacted one of my favorite CD-ROM dealers, CD-ROM Access, who kindly sold me a copy at US\$25, with another US\$9.95 for delivery to my home in Sydney in just over a week! Kon-Tiki Interactive is by the Voyager company, who have produced a number of fine titles. For a visit to them, go to <<http://www.voyagerco.com>> The opening screen is almost identical to that of the Kon-Tiki Museum, being designed by the same team. Unlike the website, though, the CD-ROM functions perfectly and covers Heyerdahl's life work in text, pictures, movie clips and clever animation being very handsomely produced and at a good price. As with the better companies, Kon-Tiki Interactive is a 'hybrid', working equally well on the Macintosh, Windows 3.11 (That's what it says), Windows 95 and MS-DOS 6.0.

There are a few bits of Scandinavian wit as well throughout. All but Thorophobes will be amused that when you select the "Help" function, Heyerdahl himself strolls in from screen left, admits he knows nothing about computers, but tells us to follow the simple directions, behind him! When he finishes his calming message, he lightly clears his throat and returns from whence he came.

The story both at the Kon-Tiki website and on the CD-ROM takes us to his work at the Pyramids of Tucume, in Peru. Wherever there are pyramids, Thor Heyerdahl can't be far behind! His latest discovery is the "Ethnography Park Pyramids of Güfmar" on Tenerife, Grand Canaries.

If people think of the Canary Islands at all, it is Europeans contemplating a cheap, sunny holiday in these Spanish possessions off the coast of North Africa. These islands were the recipient of the first European colonial push away from